

## **SAH Policy on Developing Advocacy Statements and Letters**

**Society of Architectural Historians**

### **Intent**

All official advocacy by the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) must align with its core mission to promote “the study, interpretation, and conservation of architecture, design, landscapes, and urbanism worldwide for the benefit of all.” Official advocacy refers to actions by SAH officers, the Executive Committee, the Board, committees, and affiliated groups; it does not apply to the individual efforts of members that they might undertake on their own. This policy ensures SAH remains engaged with issues supporting its mission and the professional lives of its members.

### **Who May Propose a Letter or Statement**

Any SAH member may propose a statement or letter to the SAH President or Executive Director, or join a letter produced by another organization.

### **Key Questions for Advocacy**

To assess whether SAH should take a position on an issue, the following questions must be answered affirmatively:

1. Does the action support SAH's mission?
2. Is the issue nationally or internationally significant?
3. Does SAH have the expertise to provide a balanced opinion, propose solutions, or develop related programs?
4. Is the response aligned with SAH's core mission?
5. Does the response reflect a consensus among SAH members?

SAH generally avoids taking positions on issues that are highly divisive amongst members. If the first four questions are met and the fifth is unclear, the SAH officers (and potentially the Executive Committee or full Board) will make the decision.

### **SAH Mission (Bylaws, Section 1.2)**

SAH promotes the study, interpretation, and conservation of the built environment. SAH serves a network of local, national, and international institutions and individuals who, by vocation or avocation, focus on the teaching, practice and history of architecture, design, landscapes, and urbanism. SAH upholds inclusivity and equal opportunity in all its activities.

**Mission-Driven Outreach** All SAH engagement must align with its mission. Three key categories inform SAH's advocacy:

## 1. Preservation of the Built Environment

Advocate for education and conservation of the built environment.

Support preservation and conservation of historic places globally.

Advocacy is handled by the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC), following a policy set in 2008, updated in 2022 and 2024. The HCC assesses advocacy opportunities based on three criteria:

1. Significance of resource: Does the resource or issue rise to the level of national or international significance, or by example represent an issue that does?
2. Centrality of resources: Does the issue primarily involve a threat to architectural or cultural resources?
3. Necessity and appropriateness of response: Is a letter or statement from SAH the appropriate response to the threat?"

## 2. Professional Life of Members

- Support the professional development of historians, practitioners and all who work with the history of the built environment
- Partner with communities of shared interests.

## 3. Education and Outreach

- Incubate scholarship, research, and education about the history of the built environment; and
- Organize opportunities to present research and exchange ideas

## Process for Advocacy

1. A member requests a statement or educational program by sending the request to the President or Executive Director.
2. The President or Executive Director forwards the request to the Executive Committee for review.
3. The Executive Committee evaluates whether the request aligns with SAH's mission.
4. If aligned, the President may assign the request to a relevant standing committee, form an *ad hoc* committee, or direct it to an individual for further action.
5. The designated committee or individual develops the statement or program plan.
6. The completed statement or program plan is returned to the President.
7. The President submits the statement or plan to the Executive Committee for review.
8. The Executive Committee approves the statement or plan.
9. The Executive Director directs staff to post the approved statement on the SAH website or, if applicable, to implement the program plan.

*If a majority of Board members disagree with the decision on relevance, the issue will be brought to a full Board vote.*

### **Statement Contents**

All letters and statements must clearly reference the SAH mission they support and address issues relevant to members' professional lives, including research, teaching, administration, or practice.

Upon completion, the letter or statement will be sent to the Executive Committee for approval by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Executive Director may cast the deciding vote.

When a majority of the Executive Committee has approved the letter or position statement (by email, phone call, or video call) it will be considered approved and will be distributed; letters will be sent to the recipient, and letters and statements will be posted to the SAH website and circulated by social media. In the event of issues with exceptionally brief windows of action the President or Executive Director will discuss with the Executive Committee the issue in advance and will send a draft of the letter or statement while it is in development.

This policy will be reviewed from time to time by the Officers, Executive Committee, and Board. This policy may also be reviewed by the full SAH Board at any time at the request of two board members.